



FOSTERING SUCCESS  
STATE FISCAL YEAR 2022



Department for Community Based Services  
Division of Protection and Permanency

## **Introduction**

Fostering Success is a ten-week workforce development initiative sponsored by the Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) that educates and empowers current and former foster youth through internships, vocational training, and professional development. Fostering Success provides current and former foster youth an opportunity to participate in a paid internship while receiving professional development and career planning support. Fostering Success includes the Earn and Learn initiative, which supports current and former foster youth in boosting their earning potential through the completion of short-term training programs or earning their GED. Fostering Success also includes the Summer Skill Series (partnering with Louisville-based True Up), which provides foster youth the opportunity to expand their knowledge and develop critical soft skills such as emotional intelligence, self-awareness, work ethic, and personal responsibility.

## **Program Participation**

The sixth year of Fostering Success began on June 1, 2021. Applicants for the program were screened and interviewed to determine their eligibility for the program. Youth selected for the program were matched with internships in their community based upon their strengths and vocational goals. The program maintained a contract with Management Registry, Inc. for payroll services, allowing the program to collaborate with public and private businesses as worksite providers.

The program's initial screening identified potential barriers to successfully completing the program, such as lack of child care, professional clothing, or transportation. Support and resources were provided to participants to address these concerns. Support services included assistance with the purchase of work clothes and shoes; connection to mental health providers; assistance in applying for family support services including the Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (KTAP), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly referred to as food stamps), and child care payment assistance through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). The program coordinator also assisted participants in accessing the available pandemic relief resources for foster youth for needs, such as rental and utility assistance and car repairs.

Sixty-two (62) youth registered for the program with 19 youth ultimately participating. Eight of these youth were given the opportunity to continue their employment through the end of the calendar year. The program coordinator and job coaches worked closely with the youth to create resumes, cover letters, and seek employment. They also assisted youth with applying for college and completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and other associated documents.

The program encompasses over 50 businesses and nonprofit organizations that partner as worksite providers. The program coordinator continues to expand partnerships and

recruit more businesses as worksite providers to increase the number and variance of work options available to participants across the state. During this season of the program, there were 19 employers who partnered with Fostering Success to serve as worksite providers. These employers included both public and private entities. Specific employers included Community Action Council, Fayette County DCBS, Jefferson County DCBS, Youth Build, Omni Visions, CHOICE, Boyd County DCBS, Legacy Manufacturing, God's Pantry, White House Clinics, Southern Recycling, Richard Staten Construction, Kidz on the Block, Western Kentucky University, Historic Rail Park, Walgreens, and UK Community Supported Agriculture.

Over the last two years, Fostering Success has adapted to the changing workforce landscape due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. DCBS offices across the state, traditionally one of the program's largest worksite providers particularly in rural areas, remained unavailable as a worksite due to the large shift to telecommuting by state employees. Kentucky's shift to offering more services online reduced the need for interns in offices. Many of the program's private business partners, particularly long-term care facilities, were also not available to be worksite providers this season. Many foster youth were apprehensive to join or rejoin the workforce, mainly in service sectors where they may have a higher risk of being exposed to COVID-19. While these changes posed challenges for the program, they also provided an opportunity to better utilize technology in supporting foster youth and expand opportunities for post-secondary education and professional development.

## **Earn and Learn**

Included in the Fostering Success program, the second season of the Earn and Learn Initiative launched on August 15, 2021, supporting current and former foster youth in boosting their earning potential through the completion of short-term vocational training programs or their GED. Participants received support in selecting a vocational program for a high-demand job that matched their skill set and interests. Participants were able to select a program through the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) that could be completed in one year or less. Youth without a high school diploma were still able to participate in Earn and Learn through KCTCS Skills U program, which allows students to earn a vocational certificate while working on their GED.

The Earn and Learn Initiative provided participants with weekly wages while they pursued the credential. Participants also received a significant level of support and guidance from their education success coach and the program coordinator. This support was an integral part of the program and was instrumental in assisting the participants in successfully navigating life challenges and barriers that would have traditionally derailed their completion of a post-secondary program.

Twelve (12) youth participated in the fall session of the Earn and Learn program with six youth earning at least one credential. All participants successfully completed their fall courses. Thirty-two (32) youth participated in the spring 2022 session of Earn and Learn. Thirteen (13) youth earned at least one credential or their GED.

Earn and Learn is now a key component of Fostering Success as it increases the number of current and former foster youth earning post-secondary credentials across the state. These credentials will increase youth capacity to earn a living wage and live independently. Post-secondary education and employment are integral to reducing the likelihood of homelessness and poverty among former foster youth. Future enhancements to the program include a partnership with Goodwill Industries to provide Earn and Learn participants with supports around resume building, interview skills, and job searching. Earn and Learn graduates also benefit from paid internships, providing them real world, relevant experience in their field.

### **Summer Skill Series**

Also included in the Fostering Success program, the Summer Skill Series provides current and former foster youth an opportunity to expand their skill set utilizing the cloud-based assessment and skill building platform, Conover. Participants have the option to complete three virtual programs: Success Profiler, Workplace Readiness, and Personal Responsibility. The Success Profiler curriculum focuses on emotional intelligence components including empathy, motivation, decision making, self-esteem, interpersonal awareness, and commitment ethics. The Employment Readiness curriculum focuses on soft skills components including respecting others, active listening, demonstrating reliability, communication, and problem-solving skills, etc. The Personal Responsibility curriculum focuses on core skills related to goal achievement including self-efficacy, achievement drive, problem-solving and resiliency, and self-esteem.

The program continues to contract with the University of Kentucky (UK) to provide professional development and career planning support. In addition to a program coordinator, UK provided job coaches and two education success coaches. The job coaches facilitated an employment readiness and training program orientation with participants and provided ongoing coaching throughout the ten weeks to support their success at the worksite. Participants worked with their job coach to identify strengths and develop a plan to achieve their vocational goals. The job coaches also served as liaisons between the youth and their worksite supervisor to address any issues with work performance, utilizing real life situations as teaching moments to promote professional development.

The education success coaches guided participants through the college enrollment and registration process. The coaches were also integral in assisting the participants through any challenges they may have faced, such as financial aid. The tuition and mandatory fees to complete the vocational program were waived for the participants through the

Tuition Waiver for Foster and Adopted Children. The program covered any other costs associated with pursuing the certificate including books, supplies, etc.